AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.   (Currently amended) A gaming system for playing a competitive bonus game comprising:

a first gaming apparatus comprising:

a game display unit;

a value input device;

a controller operatively coupled to said game display unit and said value input device, said controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to said processor,

said controller being programmed to cause said game display unit to generate a game display relating to one of the following games: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo,

said controller being programmed to determine a value payout associated with an outcome of said game;

a second gaming apparatus operatively coupled to said first gaming apparatus;

a bonus controller operatively coupled to said first and second gaming apparatuses, said bonus controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to said processor of said bonus controller,

~~said bonus controller being programmed to receive wagering data from said first and second gaming apparatuses,~~

said bonus controller being programmed to enter a first player at said first gaming apparatus into said competitive bonus game when said first player obtains a qualifying <u>event associated with said game</u> ~~win at one of said games generated by said game display unit of said first gaming apparatus~~,

<u>wherein said competitive bonus game has a closed set of participants for said competitive bonus game, each of said participants attempting to achieve a goal, and</u>

<u>wherein each of said participants has a probability of achieving said goal relative to all other participants in said closed set, said probability set to an initial value;</u>

said bonus controller being programmed to associate said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set when said first player enters said competitive bonus game,

said bonus controller being programmed to only increase said probability of achieving said goal for said participant associated with said first player from said initial probability upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for said first player, wherein increasing said probability for said participant decreases said probability for all other participants in said closed set,

said bonus controller being programmed to determine odds for said first player to win said competitive bonus game,

said bonus controller being programmed to vary odds of winning said competitive bonus game for at least a second player after entering said first player into said competitive bonus game, said second player having been previously entered into said competitive bonus game,

said bonus controller being programmed to determine an outcome of said competitive bonus game, and

said bonus controller being programmed to transmit data corresponding to said outcome of said competitive bonus game to said first and second gaming apparatuses.

2.   (Original) A gaming system as defined in claim 1 wherein said game display unit comprises a video display unit that is capable of generating video images.

3.   (Canceled)

4.   (Original) A gaming system as defined in claim 1 wherein said game display unit comprises at least one mechanical slot machine reel.

5.   (Original) A gaming system as defined in claim 1 comprising a remote display for displaying said competitive bonus game.

6.   (Currently amended) A gaming system as defined in claim 1 wherein said bonus controller is programmed to determine a type of qualifying event associated with said game outcome corresponding to said outcome of said game generated by said game

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~~display unit of said first gaming apparatus~~ and vary <u>said probability of achieving said goal</u> ~~odds of winning said competitive bonus game~~ for said first player and <u>all other said</u> <u>participants</u> ~~said second player~~ according to said type of qualifying <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~.

7.   (Canceled)

8.   (Canceled)

9.   (Currently amended) A gaming system for playing a competitive bonus game comprising:

a first gaming apparatus comprising:

a display unit;

a value input device;

a controller operatively coupled to said display unit and said value input device, said controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to said processor of said first gaming apparatus,

said controller being programmed to receive data representing a payline selection made by a first player,

said controller being programmed to cause a game display to be generated by said display unit, said game display comprising images of a plurality of slot machine symbols each of which is associated with a respective slot machine reel,

said controller being programmed to determine a value payout associated with an outcome of said slots game, said controller being programmed to determine said outcome of said slots game based on a first configuration of said slot machine symbols;

a second gaming apparatus operatively coupled to said first gaming apparatus, said second gaming apparatus comprising:

a display unit;

a value input device;

a controller operatively coupled to said display unit and said value input device, said controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to said processor of said second gaming apparatus,

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said controller being programmed to receive data representing a

payline selection made by a second player,

said controller being programmed to cause a game display to be

generated by said display unit, said game display comprising images of a

plurality of slot machine symbols each of which is associated with a respective

slot machine reel,

said controller being programmed to determine a value payout

associated with an outcome of said slots game, said controller being

programmed to determine said outcome of said slots game based on a

configuration of said slot machine symbols;

a bonus controller operatively coupled to said first and second gaming apparatuses,

said bonus controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to said

processor of said bonus controller,

said bonus controller being programmed to receive ~~wagering~~ data from said

first and second gaming apparatuses,

said bonus controller being programmed to enter said first player at said first

gaming apparatus into said competitive bonus game when said first player obtains a

qualifying event associated with ~~win at~~ said slots game,

wherein said competitive bonus game has a closed set of participants

for said competitive bonus game, each of said participants attempting to

achieve a goal, and

wherein each of said participants has a probability of achieving said

goal relative to all other participants in said closed set, said probability set to

an initial value;

said bonus controller being programmed to associate said first player with one

and only one of said participants from said closed set when said first player enters

said competitive bonus game,   .

said bonus controller being programmed to only increase said probability of

achieving said goal for said participant associated with said first player from said

initial probability upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for said first

player, wherein increasing said probability for said participant decreases said

probability for all other participants in said closed set,

~~said bonus controller being programmed to determine odds for said first player to win said competitive bonus game,~~

~~said bonus controller being programmed to vary odds of winning said competitive bonus game for at least said second player after entering said first player into said competitive bonus game, said second player having been previously entered into said competitive bonus game,~~

said bonus controller being programmed to determine an outcome of said competitive bonus game, and

said bonus controller being programmed to transmit data corresponding to said outcome of said competitive bonus game to said first and second gaming apparatuses.

10.   (Original) A gaming system as defined in claim 9 wherein said display units of said first and second gaming apparatuses comprise video display units that are capable of generating video images.

11.   (Original) A gaming system as defined in claim 10, wherein said controllers of said first and second gaming apparatuses are programmed to cause video images comprising images of a plurality of simulated slot machine reels to be displayed on said display units of said first and second gaming apparatuses.

12.   (Original) A gaming system as defined in claim 9 wherein said display units of said first and second gaming apparatuses comprise at least one mechanical slot machine reel.

13.   (Cancelled)

14.   (Currently amended) A gaming system as defined in claim 9, wherein said bonus controller is programmed to qualify said first and second players for said competitive bonus game when one of the following events occurs:

said first and second players play said <u>slots</u> ~~first~~ game and obtain a specific outcome,

said first and second players play said <u>slots</u> ~~first~~ game and obtain a plurality of specific outcomes,

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said first and second players play said <u>slots</u> ~~first~~ game a predetermined number of times,

said first and second players play said <u>slots</u> ~~first~~ game for a predetermined duration of time, and

said first and second players play said <u>slots</u> ~~first~~ game a plurality of times and wager a predetermined sum of money over said plurality of times.

15.   (Currently amended) A bonus controller for generating a competitive bonus game in a gaming system, said bonus controller comprising:

a processor;

a memory operatively coupled to said processor,

said bonus controller being programmed to receive ~~wagering~~ data corresponding to a game selected from one of the following games: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo,

said bonus controller being programmed to enter a first player associated with a first gaming apparatus into said competitive bonus game when said first player obtains a qualifying <u>event associated with</u> ~~win at~~ one of said games,

<u>wherein said competitive bonus game has a closed set of participants for said</u> <u>competitive bonus game, each of said participants attempting to achieve a goal, and</u>

<u>wherein each of said participants has a probability of achieving said goal</u> <u>relative to all other participants in said closed set, said probability set to an initial</u> <u>value;</u>

<u>said bonus controller being programmed to associate said first player with one and</u> <u>only one of said participants from said closed set when said first player enters said</u> <u>competitive bonus game,</u>

<u>said bonus controller being programmed to only increase said probability of achieving</u> <u>said goal for said participant associated with said first player from said initial probability</u> <u>upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for said first player, wherein increasing</u> <u>said probability for said participant decreases said probability for all other participants in said</u> <u>closed set,</u>

~~said bonus controller being programmed to determine odds for said first player to win~~ ~~said competitive bonus game,~~

~~said bonus controller being programmed to vary odds of winning said competitive bonus game for at least a second player after entering said first player into said competitive bonus game, said second player having been previously entered into said competitive bonus game,~~

said bonus controller being programmed to determine an outcome of said competitive bonus game, and

said bonus controller being programmed to transmit data corresponding to said outcome of said competitive bonus game.

16.   (Canceled)

17.   (Currently amended) A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 15, wherein said bonus controller is programmed to:

qualify said first player for said competitive bonus game when one of the following events occurs:

said first player plays said game and obtains a specific outcome,

said first player plays said game and obtains a plurality of specific outcomes,

said first player plays said game a predetermined number of times,

said first player plays said game for a predetermined duration of time, <u>or</u> [[and]]

said first player plays said game a plurality of times and wagers a predetermined sum of money over said plurality of times.

18.   (Canceled)

19.   (Currently amended) A gaming method, comprising:

causing a game display of one of the following games to be generated on a display unit of a first gaming apparatus: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo;

causing a game display of one of the following games to be generated on a display unit of a second gaming apparatus: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo;

determining an <u>event associated with</u> ~~outcome of~~ said game represented by said game display generated on said display unit of said first gaming apparatus;

transmitting ~~wagering~~ data from said first gaming apparatus to a bonus controller;

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determining if said <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~ is a qualifying <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~ for a competitive bonus game;

qualifying a first player at said first gaming apparatus for said competitive bonus game if said <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~ is a qualifying <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~;

<u>limiting said competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of said participants attempting to reach a goal;</u>

<u>establishing an initial probability of achieving said goal for each of said participants relative to all other participants in said closed set;</u>

<u>associating said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set when said first player enters said competitive bonus game;</u>

<u>increasing only said probability of achieving said goal for said participant associated with said first player from said initial probability and decreasing said probability for all other participants in said closed set, upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for said first player;</u>

~~varying odds of winning said competitive bonus game for said first player and at least a second player after qualifying said first player for said competitive bonus game, said second player having been previously qualified for said competitive bonus game;~~

initiating said competitive bonus game;

transmitting display data associated with said competitive bonus game from said bonus controller to a display unit; and

determining a value payout associated with a bonus outcome of said competitive bonus game.

20.   (Currently amended) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, additionally comprising:

determining a type of qualifying <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~ corresponding to said outcome, and

varying <u>said probability of achieving said goal</u> ~~odds of winning said competitive bonus game for said first player and at least said second player~~ according to said type of qualifying <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~.

21.   (Currently amended) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, additionally comprising:

qualifying said first player for said competitive bonus game when one of the following events occurs:

said first player plays said game generated on said display unit of said first gaming apparatus and obtains a specific outcome,

said first player plays said game generated on said display unit of said first gaming apparatus and obtains a plurality of specific outcomes,

said first player plays said game generated on said display unit of said first gaming apparatus a predetermined number of times,

said first player plays said game generated on said display unit of said first gaming apparatus for a predetermined duration of time, or [[and]]

said first player plays said game generated on said display unit of said first gaming apparatus a plurality of times and wagers a predetermined sum of money over said plurality of times.

22.   (Original) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, additionally comprising initiating said competitive bonus game on a periodic basis.

23.   (Original) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, additionally comprising initiating said competitive bonus game when a competitive bonus award associated with said competitive bonus game reaches a predetermined amount.

24.   (Canceled) .

25.   (Currently amended) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, wherein initiating said competitive bonus game comprises initiating one of the following competitive bonus games: a race-type competitive bonus game, a screen-clearing competitive bonus game, or a Ferris wheel type competitive bonus game.

26.   (Currently amended) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, wherein transmitting said wagering data comprises transmitting one of the following wagering data: a specific event associated with outcome of said game generated on said display unit of said first gaming apparatus, an amount wagered by said first player, a duration of play by said first player or a status of said first player.

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27.   (Original) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, wherein transmitting said display data comprises transmitting said display data to a remote display unit.

28.   (Original) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, wherein transmitting said display data comprises transmitting said display data to said display unit of said first gaming apparatus.

29.   (Canceled)

30.   (Currently amended) A gaming method, comprising:

causing a video image representing a game to be generated at a first gaming apparatus, said video image representing one of the following games: video poker, video blackjack, video slots, video keno or video bingo,

said video image comprising an image of at least five playing cards if said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus comprises video poker,

said video image comprising an image of a plurality of simulated slot machine reels if said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus comprises video slots,

said video image comprising an image of a plurality of playing cards if said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus comprises video blackjack,

said video image comprising an image of a plurality of keno numbers if said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus comprises video keno, and

said video image comprising an image of a bingo grid if said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus comprises video bingo; and,

determining an event associated with outcome of said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus;

determining if said <u>event</u> ~~outcome of said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus~~ is a qualifying <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~ for a competitive bonus game;

qualifying a first player for said competitive bonus game if said <u>event</u> ~~outcome of said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus~~ is a qualifying <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~;

<u>limiting said competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of said participants attempting to reach a goal;</u>

<u>establishing an initial probability of achieving said goal for each of said participants relative to all other participants in said closed set;</u>

<u>associating said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set when said first player enters said competitive bonus game;</u>

<u>increasing only said probability of achieving said goal for said participant associated with said first player from said initial probability and decreasing said probability for all other participants in said closed set, upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for said first player;</u>

~~varying odds of winning said competitive bonus game for said first player and at least a second player after qualifying said first player for said competitive bonus game, said second player having been previously qualified for said competitive bonus game;~~

causing a video image representing said competitive bonus game to be generated, said video image representing ~~said competitive bonus game representing one of the following competitive bonus games:~~ a race-type competitive bonus game~~, a screen-clearing competitive bonus game,~~ or a rotating wheel type competitive bonus game;

initiating said competitive bonus game;

generating a randomized computation of <u>said participant modified</u> ~~an entry to modify~~ according to said <u>probability</u> ~~odds~~ associated with said <u>participant</u> ~~entry~~; and

identifying <u>which participant achieves its' goal first</u> ~~a winner of said competitive bonus game~~.

31.   (Currently amended) A gaming method as defined in claim 30, additionally comprising:

determining a type of qualifying <u>event associated with</u> ~~outcome corresponding to said outcome of~~ said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus, and

varying <u>the probability</u> ~~odds~~ of <u>achieving the goal</u> ~~winning said competitive bonus game~~ for said first player and at least said second player according to said type of qualifying <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~.

32.   (Original) A gaming method as defined in claim 30, additionally comprising:

qualifying said first player for said competitive bonus game when said first player plays said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus and obtains a specific outcome, or when said first player plays said game represented by said video image generated at said first gaming apparatus a predetermined number of times.

33.   (Original) A gaming method as defined in claim 30, additionally comprising initiating said competitive bonus game on a random basis.

34.   (Canceled)

35.   (Canceled)

36.   (Canceled)

37.   (Canceled)

38.   (Original) A gaming method as defined in claim 37, comprising initiating said competitive bonus game by a controller of a second gaming apparatus.

39.   (Currently amended) A method of providing a competitive bonus game in a gaming network, comprising:

receiving ~~wagering~~ data at a bonus controller, said ~~wagering~~ data corresponding to play of one of the following games at a gaming apparatus: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo;

qualifying a first player for said competitive bonus game if an <u>event associated with</u> ~~outcome of~~ said game played at said gaming apparatus is a qualifying <u>event</u> ~~outcome~~;

<u>limiting said competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of said participants attempting to reach a goal;</u>

<u>establishing an initial probability of achieving said goal for each of said participants relative to all other participants in said closed set;</u>

<u>associating said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set when said first player enters said competitive bonus game;</u>

<u>increasing only said probability of achieving said goal for said participant associated with said first player from said initial probability and decreasing said probability for all other participants in said closed set, upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for said first player;</u>

~~varying odds of winning said competitive bonus game for said first player and at least a second player after qualifying said first player for said competitive bonus game, said second player having been previously qualified for said competitive bonus game;~~

initiating said competitive bonus game;

transmitting display data associated with said competitive bonus game from said bonus controller to a display unit, said display unit being operatively coupled to said bonus controller; and

determining a value payout associated with an outcome of said competitive bonus game.

40.   (Currently amended) A gaming method as defined in claim 39, additionally comprising:

determining a type of qualifying <u>event associated with</u> ~~outcome corresponding to~~ said outcome of said game played at said gaming apparatus, and

varying the probability ~~odds~~ of achieving the goal ~~winning said competitive bonus~~ ~~game~~ for said first player and at least said second player according to said type of qualifying ~~outcome~~.

41.   (Original) A gaming method as defined in claim 39, additionally comprising initiating said competitive bonus game on a periodic basis.

42.   (Original) A gaming method as defined in claim 39, additionally comprising initiating said competitive bonus game when a competitive bonus award associated with said competitive bonus game reaches a predetermined amount.

43.   (Currently amended) A memory having a computer program stored therein, said computer program being capable of being used in connection with a bonus controller in a gaming system, said memory comprising:

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to receive ~~wagering~~ data corresponding to a game, said game selected from one of the following games: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo;

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to enter a first player into said competitive bonus game when said first player obtains a qualifying event associated with said game ~~win~~ ~~at one of said games corresponding to said wagering data~~;

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to limit said competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of said participants attempting to reach a goal;

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to establish an initial probability of achieving said goal for each of said participants relative to all other participants in said closed set;

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to associate said first player with one and

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only one of said participants from said closed set when said first player enters said competitive bonus game;

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to increase only said probability of achieving said goal for said participant associated with said first player from said initial probability and decreasing said probability for all other participants in said closed set, upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for said first player;

~~a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to determine odds for said first player to win said competitive bonus game;~~

~~a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to vary odds of winning said competitive bonus game for at least a second player after entering said first player into said competitive bonus game, said second player having been previously entered into said competitive bonus game;~~

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to determine an outcome of said competitive bonus game; and

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to transmit data corresponding to said outcome of said competitive bonus game to a display unit.

44.   (Currently amended) A memory as defined in claim 43 wherein said memory additionally comprises a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to:

determine a type of qualifying event associated with ~~win corresponding to~~ said qualifying event ~~win~~ corresponding to said wagering data, and

vary said probability of achieving said goal ~~odds of winning said competitive bonus game~~ for said first player and all other said participants ~~at least said second player~~ according to said type of qualifying event ~~outcome.~~

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45.   (Original) A memory as defined in claim 43 wherein said memory additionally comprises a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause said bonus controller to generate video images corresponding to said competitive bonus game on said display unit.

46.   (New) A gaming system as defined in claim 1,
wherein said additional qualifying event is the only way to increase said participant's probability of achieving said goal.

47.   (New) A gaming system as defined in claim 1, wherein said bonus controller is programmed to associate said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set by automatically determining which participant to associate with said first player.

48.   (New) A gaming system as defined in claim 1, wherein said bonus controller is programmed to associate said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set by allowing said first player to select with which participant said first player would like to be associated.

49.   (New) A gaming system as defined in claim 9, wherein said additional qualifying event is the only way to increase said participant's probability of achieving said goal.

50.   (New) A bonus controller as defined in claim 15, wherein said bonus controller is programmed to associate said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set by allowing said first player to select with which participant said first player would like to be associated.

51.   (New) A bonus controller as defined in claim 15, wherein said bonus controller is programmed to initiate said competitive bonus game when all of said participants have been associated with a separate player.

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52.   (New) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, further comprising associating said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set by automatically determining which participant to associate with said first player.

53.   (New) A gaming method as defined in claim 19, further comprising establishing said qualifying events as the only way to vary said participants' probabilities of achieving said goal.

54.   (New) A gaming method as defined in claim 30, additionally comprising initiating said competitive bonus game when each of said participants have been associated with a different player.

55.   (New) A gaming method as defined in claim 30, further comprising associating said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set by automatically determining which participant to associate with said first player.

56.   (New) A gaming method as defined in claim 30, further comprising establishing said qualifying events as the only way to vary said participants' probabilities of achieving said goal.

57.   (New) A gaming method as defined in claim 30, wherein associating said first player with one and only one of said participants from said closed set comprises allowing said first player to select with which participant said first player would like to be associated.